



# The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

MARCH 1989

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*'Jesus Christ is risen today—Halleluya'*



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*Opinions expressed by contributors do not commit the C.S.I.*

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**MARCH 1989**

**EDITOR**

**THE REV. DASS BABU**

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**HON. BUSINESS MANAGER**

**THE REV. M. AZARIAH, General Secretary**

*Synod Secretariat*

Post Box No. 4906, CATHEDRAL ROAD, MADRAS-600 086

Phone : 471266

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**HON. AGENT IN U.K.**

**Rev. I. L. Thomas**

11, CARTERET STREET, LONDON SW1H 9DL

Tel. No. 01-222 4214

**HON. AGENT FOR THE U.S.A.**

**The Rev. Abraham D. Purshothaman, Presbyter**

Cavalry United Presbyterian Church

64 Magnolia Avenue, Jersey City

NEW JERSEY 07306 U.S.A. TEL. 201. 798-2888

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## 25 Years Ago!

The pass or pisah with which the Christian festival connected is familiar to the readers of the Old Testament. It is a Jewish festival which again commemorated the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, but in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which they foreshadowed. Thus Passover with a new conception added to it, if Christ as the true Paschal lamb slain and also risen from the dead, 'as the first-fruits of them that are sleep', informed the celebration of Christian Easter.

—Churchman 195

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# Communication Process Contents



*'You killed the one who leads to life but God raised him from death and we are witnesses to this.'*

(Acts 3 : 15 TEV)

Semanticists distinguish three classes of meanings in the communication content. There is the cognition aspect, pertaining to the realm of ideas. Information is given to the audience so that they could think about it and draw their own conclusion. Secondly, there is the emotional aspect where the aim of the communication is to rouse an emotion whether it is fear or hostility. Finally, there is the directive aspect asking the listeners to do something. As a matter of fact, all these three aspects intermingle in the communication content. Peter's statement on the Death and Resurrection of Jesus was one of the best statements ever passed in such a simple fashion, fulfilling all the communication aspects.

Contents essentially depend upon language, although non-verbal gestures also form part of it. Words have two functions. They are signs, in that they point to or symbolise objects external to the user. They also symbolise the attitudes of those who use them. Thus, the words have denotative as well as connotative meanings. For example, 'the Cross' not only denotes an object but also connotes the symbolic meanings such as heinous punishment, death, defeat, suffering etc. but in the case of Jesus it acquired special meaning—it is the symbol of victory, Protection assurance, sacrifice etc.

It is obvious that understanding the communication process with reference to the contents involves the understanding of the symbols used. The study of the meanings

of the various symbols is the area of Semantics. It is the science which studies the meaning of communication content. When we communicate we want those who receive the message to make certain responses, to know certain things, to believe in one way rather than another and to be able to do certain things. That is why good speakers search and select words which will express meanings clearly. Much of the confusion in language results because of various aspects. The preacher may use some words with some connotation in his mind but the other members of his audience may understand it in different ways. Thus, the language used in the communication largely determines the response in the hearer or reader. Although dictionary gives us the meaning of words, it does not convey the full meaning of the words. The sermons which are prepared depending too much on concordance and dictionaries tend to become flat! The ability of a communicator could be assessed by the way in which he selects and arranges words which could elicit the intended meanings from the receiver or produces changes in him.

We the Indian Christians live in an environment of religious pluralism in a secular setting. Our country with its array of people of so many castes, ethnic, racial and religious identities, is a microcosm of the world. It is our privilege and challenge to communicate the Gospel in this backdrop. Time and again it is necessary for us to examine our communication machinery to take stock of things. A demographic profile which I conducted in two cities among people

of other faiths a few years ago revealed me that more than 80% did not know anything about the Resurrection but, paradoxically enough, 90% of them knew all about the Good Friday. Something wrong with our communication ! Or we must be finding it difficult to witness to something which we are not experiencing. The call to communicate the Good News is not just a bestowal of privilege or status but summons to a responsible work and witness. Christian communication is the response evoked when those who are gripped by the Power of Resurrection feel compelled to communicate it to others. Let us not forget that the Church is the Body of Christ and its life is the continuation of the

Ministry of Jesus . Jesus lived, walked and talked among people. He built a unique bond of trust by using the people's language and speaking in terms they could understand. He would never have tolerated the Sloppy stewardship we sometimes cover with such a spiritual facade. Is faulty communication stewardship simply a result of ignorance ? This can happen, of course, but more often than not, we have a shaky grasp of what communication is all about. Therefore it is necessary to start at square one, so to speak, and wade through some basic material from communication theory.

—DASS BABU

## ....AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION

Christian Communication must announce  
No, Christian communication must denounce,  
No, Christian Communication must promote sharing,  
No, Christian Communication must create community,  
Yes, Christian Communication must be hopeful  
No, it must be graceful  
Yes, it must have integrity  
No, it must call for response

And listen to the cry of the voiceless  
Listen to the groaning of the hungry  
Listen to the pain of the landless  
Listen to the sigh of the oppressed  
and to the laughter of children,  
For that is authentic communication :

Please stop, please ! Silence  
Listen to the beating of your heart  
Listen to the blowing of the wind,  
the movement of the Spirit  
Be silent—said the Lord,  
and know that I am God.

Listening to the people  
Living with the people  
dying for people.

## First Female Anglican Bishop

BOSTON—During a three-hour liturgy (11 February) attended by an estimated 8,500 people, including nearly five dozen bishops, Barbara Harris, a 58-year-old priest, became the first female Anglican bishop in the world. Harris was elected last September as a suffragan (assistant), bishop by a convention of the Diocese of (Eastern) Massachusetts of the U.S.-based Episcopal Church.

During worship, Episcopal Presiding Bishop Edmond Lee Browning made what is normal invitation in Anglican ordination liturgies : 'If any of you know any reason why we should not proceed, let it now be made known.'

Thereupon, a representative of the unofficial Prayer Book Society went to a microphone to denounce the consecration as a 'sacrilegious imposture'. The congregation jeered and booed ; Browning pleaded for silence.

Also objecting was an Episcopal priest from New York. He called the consecration of a woman as a bishop 'contrary to the unbroken tradition of 2000 years of apostolic order'.

Again calming the congregation, Browning said such objections were 'broadly ventilated' since Harris was elected, during which time she received affirming votes by

majorities of the Episcopal diocesan bishops and standing committees.

Browning then continued the rite : 'Is it your will that we ordain Barbara a bishop ?' 'That is our will' was the loud response of the congregation.

Before becoming a priest in 1980, she was a public-relations executive for an oil company. Black and divorced, Harris have long been active in civil-rights and femenist causes.

The ordination of women as deacons has taken place in much of Anglicanism. Besides in the United States women have been ordained Anglican priests in Brazil, Cuba, Hong Kong, Uganda, Kenya, Canada, and New Zealand. In the latter two provinces, they are likely to be elected bishops within the next few years.

Among other things, opponents of the ordination of women as priest or bishops cite negative effects that it could have on relationships with Roman Catholicism.

The Harris consecration is expected to usher in a period of 'impaired communion' in Anglicanism, as some bishops and diocese have announced they cannot or will not recognize her as a bishop of the Church.

—EPS

# 'Jesus Christ is risen today—Halleluya'

## A MESSAGE FOR EASTER

—VICTOR PREMASAGAR

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On Easter day we rejoice and praise God that Jesus is risen from the dead. Death is overcome with life—The disciples, who were shattered on the Good Friday without hope and without a future, suddenly found on Easter Day, new hope and new future for themselves and for the whole human kind.

St. Paul again and again speak of resurrection and the power of resurrection. The power of resurrection is God creating a new hope and a new future when everything seems humanly impossible. The Biblical narratives tell of the acts of God in times of crises—making a way through the Red sea when Isralites were pursued by the Egyptians, liberating them through a judge or a king, when their enemies oppressed and surrounded them, sending his message of comfort and return to Jerusalem, when they were in exile, enslaved and without hope. This resurrection hope is experienced by the Christian church bringing assurance of a new future for them and for nations.

The greatest miracle of the Easter is the power it released for new hope and new future for all people. Resurrection not only in life after death but also here and now bringing hope to the outcastes and marginalised communities in every nation—slaves have been given hope of release, the captives, freedom, the outcastes dignity and human values for a new life ; the marginalised recovered hope to enter

into the main stream of life in community sharing in the resources and possibilities of human growth and development. Resurrection is the assurance of God's power and action in every situation of hoplessness.

The risen Jesus sends out his disciples on his father's mission. St. John writes about Jesus appearance to the disciples in the upper room, bringing a new vision and sending them out on mission (John 19 : 20-22). John writes of three things that happened in that encounter.

The disciples were glad. Jesus breathed on them the Holy Spirit with the words 'As the father hath sent me so send I you'. He showed them the marks of his wounds in his hands and his feet.

This was the power they received from the Master for action in the world but with empty hands—marks of the cross and the resurrected Lord.

Jesus sends us with the same bidding in the power of the Holy Spirit. His empty hands challenge the church to follow the path of his Cross and Resurrection.

Easter releases new power into the lives of people—bringing hope, courage and power for action. The church shares this hope and power and as the messianic community in each context, bringing new hope of resurrection to all.

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# Mission in Christ's Way through Crucifixion and Resurrection

REV. M. AZARIAH, General Secretary, C.S.I. Synod

## Introduction

The March '89 issue of the 'AIM' Magazine of the Evangelical Fellowship of India has an eye catching cover page with the banner, 'Your Indescribable Power'. There is a yellow coloured Star with seven spangles with as many phrases linked to the above assertion printed at the centre of the star saying, 'THE POWER TO' in big letters. The nine page article on the cover page theme by Wesley L. Doewel, apparently not an Indian, has well explicated with abundant Bible texts supporting the availability to any Child of God.

## The Power to :

- (a) Contact heaven's throne room.
- (b) Co-operate with God.
- (c) Resist and defeat Satan.
- (d) Transcend the laws of nature.
- (e) Obtain Angelic assistance.
- (f) Move mountains.
- (g) Bless: i.e. blessing others.

I eagerly read this article looking for the source of this power to do all these seven mighty and even supernatural achievements available for any child of God. But, I found reference only to the *God of the Bible* as a source of such power and that only in general terms. Certainly, no one can disagree, but the reader is left with a deeper question as to how one had access to the availability of this 'Indescribable Power'. The power to bless, for instance, was in fact the central purpose of the Mission of God ever since the time of Abraham whom God called to 'bless all nations' (Gen. : 12, 1-3). In this March issue of this magazine, with the Good Friday and Easter occurring in this same month, naturally some articles can be expected to be relevant to the season of remembering the Cross, Death and Resurrection of our Lord, linking them with the power of God, available to any child of God and to the mission that every child of God or Christian is called to be engaged in. Fortunately for me, in this same magazine was an article, 'A Word Study on the Cross' by Vayne A. Detzler, again apparently not an Indian. Both these articles set me thinking to raise the following three questions : What kind of Power Jesus used for His Ministry ? Where is the source of Power for Mission in Christ's Way ? How can such power in the Spirit of Christ be applied for Christian witness in India today ?

## I. What Kind of power Jesus used for His Ministry

At the outset, the question could be raised whether Jesus of Nazareth, during His three and half years of Ministry, endeavoured to acquire an 'Indescribable Power' as delineated in the magazine article mentioned above for carrying out His mission ? Even a cursory reading of the narratives of the temptation of Jesus in the Gospels (Mark 1 : 12-13 ; Matthew 4 : 1-11 ; Luke 4 : 1-13) makes it clear that Jesus vehemently refused to

acquire or to acquire to any supernatural power as that being offered by the devil the ruler of this world. That is why He would not yield to the temptation of performing miracles like converting stone into bread or jumping from the pinnacle of the highest mountain, thus demonstrating the supernatural power that the devil said was available to Him as the Son of God. No, no ; that would mean He was yielding, in fact, to the power and authority of the ruler of this world who wanted Jesus to bow down before himself thus acknowledging him as the source of such supernatural powers. Most firmly then Jesus rejected the offer and attraction of all kinds of powers that are alien and opposed to the power of the Holy Spirit. It must be noticed that the Gospels clearly mention that it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. The temptation narratives obviously depict the picture of Jesus being caught between the claims of the power of the Holy Spirit on the one hand and the claims of the supernatural powers of the devil on the other. For 40 days in the desert, Jesus is struggling to choose between the conflicting claims of powers with which He would function or operate His mission as the Messiah and the Son of God sent by His Father (Joh Ch. 5 : 14-17) into the world which God so loves (John 3 : 15). Precisely to be tested in the desert and tempted by the devil, therefore, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness. But after the temptation and testing for 40 long days, Jesus came out most decidedly to the side of the Holy Spirit, thus choosing the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the same spirit that had come upon Him from the Father in the shape of a dove at His Baptism in the River Jordan. Immediately after this, the same Spirit was leading Him to be tested in the desert. This was not easy choice for Jesus even though it was a fact that some 30 years earlier His mother Mary had conceived Him also by the same Holy Spirit. The decision and choice at the time of testing in the desert was not easy for Jesus because the manifestations and the effects and signs of the powers from the ruler of this world are much more readily available and perceptible to the five senses of human being than the Fruits (Gal. 6 : 21 f) and manifestations of the Holy Spirit which are gifts of God (II Cor. Ch. 12 & 13). After all, it is easier to believe and accept what can be seen than what is unseen. So Jesus would point out to those who came to believe in Him because they saw the miracles He had performed (John 2 : 23) that He would accept them only if they believed in Him by faith rather than by sight. This is the same point He makes with Nicodemus who came to Him calling Him *Rabbi* only because he saw the miracles Jesus performed and from what he saw he proceeded to infer that Jesus had come from God. Thus, Nicodemus believed in Jesus 'by sight rather than by faith'. And Jesus would demand, one should be born anew by the Spirit from above to be acceptable as a believer. That to say, belief must be based not on what is available to the senses but based upon faith in the unseen fruits

fect of the Holy Spirit. The unseen fruits of the Holy Spirit are listed by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians Love, Joy, Peace, etc. (Gal. 6:21 f). Such are the inner realities of the Spirit of God, that make St. John firm in his letter (I John 4:4) 'Greater is He that is you than he that is in the World'.

The greatest of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul claims, is Love. He describes it so uniquely in I Corinthians Chapter 13. Love, therefore, is the chief manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, what Jesus decided to choose in the desert was the power of love rather than the supernatural miracle power. It is this power of love and all that flows out of it that the Gospels depict as having been supremely demonstrated upon the Cross on which Jesus was crucified and died. This is where we see the Lamb of God that takes away the Sin of the World' (John 1:29). That was how the mission of God was being carried out by Jesus the Son of God, in the power of love as revealed on the Cross. The power of the Cross, then, becomes the power of Love. In fact it is the power of the Holy Spirit since, as St. Paul points out, the love of God is spread abroad by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of human beings (Romans 5:5). It is this power with which any child of God must engage in the Mission in Christ's way.

To probe further into the meaning, content and nature of the power of love which we identified as Jesus choosing as against the supernatural powers from the ruler of this world, therefore, we need to look at the Cross at Golgotha upon which the Love of God was supremely demonstrated for all history of humankind to gain from. The founder of the IONA Community, George Macleod had once affirmed saying, 'There was a Cross in the heart of God, long before there was one on the green hill of Calvary'. There we see the deep link between the love of God and the Cross of Jesus as between the two sides of the same coin. Indeed the loving and bleeding heart of God found expression in the suffering and death of Jesus as the 'Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the World'. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, 3:18-19 points out that to the Christian believer the recollection of the ignomony and the pain of the Cross only served to intensify the realisation of the depth of God's love for humankind. And he further teaches that the apparent weakness of the Cross was really a demonstration of the restrained power of divine Love (II Cor. 13:14; I Cor. 1:24-25). The suffering love or the sacrificial love, therefore, has the power to heal, to forgive and to reconcile. These unseen powers are inner realities of the Holy Spirit, in contrast with the supernatural powers from the Devil. Is it not true that those who perpetuate, participate and bask in the glories and sunshine of these supernatural powers and their manifestations, even within the fellowship of the Body of Christ, tend to exclude and reject those that are not of their own kind? They only make a casualty or violate the power to love, the power to forgive and the power to reconcile! Clearly, then, the power of suffering love becomes the power to save others *Saving others* much more than *blessing others*, had now become the Missionary task for Jesus on the Cross. The letter to the Hebrews brings out this truth when it affirmed that 'there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood' (Heb. 9:22-28). It is this paradoxical truth that power comes through suffering sacrifice and death that Jesus Himself had affirmed. He declared unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it cannot produce many more grains' (John 12:24). And it is the same principle that becomes the central theme of the Mandate for Mission

given to His first band of disciples in the 'Upper Room' on the first day of His Resurrection by the Risen Lord (John 20:19-23). There we read of the appearance of the Risen Lord in the midst of His disciples with the greeting: 'Peace be with you'. After saying this, the Lord showed His hands and His side. Those were the unmistakable marks of the wounds suffered on the Cross by their Master and Lord. Obviously and intentionally the Risen Lord was reminding them of the wounds He received, of the pain and suffering He underwent, the blood He had to shed, the burden of the sin of the world He was weighed down, and which found its vent in His cry of dereliction, 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me'. The incomparable agony and passion that He had experienced through His crucifixion, that had the cumulative consequence in His being raised from the dead by God His Father! This was the basis for the Great Commission for missionary task. In other words, the causative power of the Suffering love of Jesus on the Cross was demonstrated as the consequent power of the Resurrection that had brought Him out of the empty tomb. This new kind of power came from the Spirit of God the Father who had raised Jesus from the dead. It was with this power He could suddenly appear to the disciples in the upper room gathered together behind locked door! It was totally different from any other kind of supernatural powers. He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. He was offering them this new kind of power. This included the power to forgive the sins of others, the power to save others. This power was earned by the shedding of the blood on the Cross and the marks of which He was presently showing them in His hands and in His side. And so He went on to say: 'If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven, if you do not forgive them they are not forgiven'. Here then is the power to forgive and the power to love. But also the power to withhold forgiveness and the power to judge. All these powers Jesus had earned by His passion, suffering and death on the Cross. And the same powers, He would pass on to His disciples and followers, on the same terms in which His Father had give them to Him. 'As the Father sent Me, so I send you' (John 20:21). It was the same principle that Jesus had revealed to His Galilean followers when He said, 'if anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross daily and follow Me' (Luke 9:23). With such a new understanding, the common cliche of private Christian piety that admonishes, 'Bear the Cross and wear the Crown' is utterly misleading. The power of the Cross is not simply the means to the end of attaining eternal life for one-self. On the contrary, obtaining the power of the Cross must lead on to the attaining of the power of the Resurrection. Just as it was the case with Jesus our Lord, only after attaining the causative power of the Cross through the suffering and sacrificial love for others, we may attain the consequent power of the Resurrection. Only in this way, any Christian or child of God becomes heir to the gift of the power of the Holy Spirit. And, this power is given and received not as private religious or spiritual reward but for being used in the fulfilment of the missionary task given with it. Therefore, the kind of power that Jesus attained through the Cross and Resurrection is the only kind of power any Christian or Child of God must seek after for its use for Mission in Christ's Way.

(To be continued)

# The Resurrection

RT. REV. DR. SUNDAR CLARKE, *Madras*

## The Resurrection—The Meaning of the Christian Faith

In our creed almost every Sunday we confess 'I look for the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come'. This is rather a bold assertion of faith. There must be something beyond ourselves that enables us to make this assertion. The looking forward to 'the Resurrection of the dead and the life to come' is because Jesus Christ died on the cross on Friday and rose again the third day. This is the central message of the Christians faith and today the church is left with a mission because of this fact in history. Quite frankly, I would hesitate to be a Christian and I would have nothing to communicate if Jesus Christ died on Good Friday and was buried that day and His earthly ministry ended in a sad tale of woe. The Christian gospel is a gospel filled with joy and hope because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words the content of the gospel would be sombre, not so much life giving but more lifeless and will not sound the note of victory but rather the note of defeat. Jesus Christ through His resurrection has defeated sin, the devil and death. This is the note vibrant in Paul's theology and as he writes in I Corinthians 15 : 54 & 55 'Death is swallowed up in victory, O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' So we find the deeper meaning of our faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian faith through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ gives content and meaning to our belief in Jesus Christ. It is the fulness of the gospel and the fulfilment of the gospel. The Resurrection gives meaning to the Christian faith.

## The Resurrection—the Message of the Christian Faith

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ makes real to us the Christian hope. What is the Christian Hope? The Christian Hope is not a 'waking dream' as thought of by Aristotle, or an earthly Utopia as thought of by the early Greeks; nor is it the blissful state of Nirvana. The Christian Hope is the fulfilment of the Messianic hope and is based on the historic Jesus Christ, who came, died and rose again. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's great act in history which creates and makes alive our faith and which is also the ground and basis of the Christian Hope. As Jurgan Moltmann puts it 'Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.' The Christian Hope is therefore something not merely to do with the future but something with great relevance to the past, meaning for the present and hope for the future. We therefore have a God and a religion

not of despair but of hope, not of futility but of promise, not of hiddenness but of revelation, not of uncertainty but of certainty.

The Resurrection also gives us a message regarding our approach to the most dreaded and last enemy of man viz., death. Until the Resurrection of Jesus Christ death was a terror, a fear and a dread to mankind. Probably until the Resurrection the attitude of man to death could be likened to Yama coming in all His pomp and glory to carry away the life of an individual. But the Easter Hope is a victorious Hope which tells us that Christ has conquered death and all its powers of fear and dread. This of course, does not make death a May (illusion) but because of the Resurrection death is reality and is also a victorious reality. Because of the resurrection, death has become to us a home going and joyful entry into a more glorious life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## The Resurrection—The Mission of the Christian Faith

A person who is filled with the joyful and victorious experience can never keep it himself. Mary Magdalen runs to the disciples to announce the good news. The two disciples going to Emmaus were communicating freely and discussing the Event of the Empty Tomb. There is a certain impelling urge within man to announce anything good. Today the Christian church should be filled with this impelling urge because we have a victorious Hope which offers something to a man who is in desperate need of it. The message of victory, of ultimate triumph must be made known to the world which so much needs it. This victorious Hope which we believe in, leaves us with a victorious mission. In other words, hope not only gives us something substantial but also sends us into the world to proclaim 'that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life' (I John 1 : 1). The Christian Hope not only sends us into the world with a mission but is also a good Apologetic. In the world in which we live today and amidst the uncertainty, the defence of the gospel is in the victorious person of Jesus Christ who came into the world, lived as a commoner at Nazareth, 'overcame the sharpness of death' and has given something to live for and to look forward to. The proclamation of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and of the Christian hope is therefore the mission of the Church in India.

# The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ

RT. REV. DR. TRINITY BHASKARAN, Vellore

## introduction

The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a great event in the history of the world. There were two schools of thought which existed among the Jews, one school of thought believed that there is no resurrection after death. They are called Sadducees. The other school of thought believed that there is resurrection after death. This school is called Pharisees.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save those who fall into sin. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, Romans 6:23.

When the Church meets at the Lord's Table for breaking the bread and blessing of the wine in accordance to the Lord's command, the Church not only proclaims the truth but also witnesses to His resurrection (I Cor. 11:26). If Christ did not resurrect from death, this act of celebration would be a saddest remembrance of his followers. This could not be an occasion of joy and thanksgiving, whereas the disciples of Jesus Christ met to make joyful remembrance of His death, re-enacting the solemn scene in the upper room in the night on which He was betrayed. This is the strongest evidence for the resurrection.

The New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old Testament. The Book of Job gives us the references to the faith of the Jews concerning the resurrection, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,' Job 19:25, 26. The Psalmist writes in his Psalm 16:10, 'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption'.

Ps. 49:15, Is. 26:19, Dan. 12:2 and Hos. 13:14 are the references which clearly bring out the basic faith in the resurrection.

## According to the Scriptures

The early Church, believed that Christ was 'raised the third day according to Scriptures', I Cor. 15:4. As it is written, that Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead on the third day', Luke 24:46, 25. However it is difficult to find out direct connection from the Old Testament regarding the Christ's resurrection on the third day. Is. 53:10-12.

It is difficult to prove from the Old Testament prophecies that the resurrection took place on the third day after the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The possibility that could derive out of Hos. 6:2, 'after two days he will raise us, on the third day he will rise us up and we shall be before him,' is redemption. Hosea is seeing the possibility of God's redemption of Israel. Christ is considered to be a Passover Lamb and Easter is Christian Simeon, I Cor. 5:7. That is why the Church reads Ex. 1-4 as the Old Testament lesson on Easter Sunday morning.

Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, Jonah 1:17. Jesus made reference to this in Matt. 12:40 to recall to the mind of the Jews to understand this as the prophecy of the burial and resurrection of Christ. 'As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'

'The Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today—tomorrow... and be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon the Mount Sinai', Ex. 19:10-11. The resurrection could not be built on these passages by Rabbis.

The events of life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ do not fit exactly with the pentateuchal pattern. Resurrection of Jesus is not a concocted story. It was an event that took place in Roman history. It was testified by the early Church and the apostles.

## The Evidence of Resurrection

There has been sufficient evidence in the New Testament, specially in the writings of St. Paul in his letters to different churches. The oldest written record of the resurrection of Jesus by St. Paul is in his letter to Corinthians, I Cor. 15:3-8, where he lists the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the various leaders of the early community. He mentions that Christ appeared to Peter first and last to Paul. All the Gospel writers mentioned the resurrection in their Gospels. Mark 16:18, Luke 24th Ch. and John 21st Ch. The tradition of the early church is that the resurrected Christ appeared to Peter first, he gave witness to the fact, 'This Jesus whom you crucified; God has made him both Lord and Christ', Acts 2:23, 36. St. Paul mentioned that Peter was one among many who saw Jesus risen from the dead. The others were the twelve disciples, the 'more than five hundred brethren', 'all the apostles' and James.

The proclamation made by the Apostles gave impetus to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. 'But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from dead, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead'.

'But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, I Cor. 15:12-22. There had been doubts in the minds of those who were against Christ. Some thought that the disciples had hallucination of Christ's immortality—that this later on became the preaching of the resurrection of Christ. This false belief had been corrected by the powerful preaching and experience of the Apostles.

Again doubts were thrown out regarding the resurrection of Christ. The preaching and the Eucharist

celebration gave answer to these doubts and the resurrection was proved beyond doubts. The Scriptural evidences were made into beautiful parables of the Church's missionary triumph as she obeys the command of her risen Master. These passages with profound theological parables, contain in its deepest sense the truth of the history, the Apostolic Church's experience of the reality and the power of Christ's resurrection.

The early church had to face strong encounter and slander from the Jews—that the disciples had stolen away the body of Jesus Christ—by which Christ's resurrection came into existence on false pretext.

### The Crucifixion and Burial

It was the normal practice to make the criminal to carry the cross-beam on his own shoulder to the place of crucifixion. Thus Jesus carried his own cross. Simon of Cyrene was made to carry the Cross of Jesus when he could not carry it. His followers, men and women stood along the sides of the path and lamented. The way led to Golgotha, the place of skull. The charge against Jesus was read—'The King of the Jews'. That is, so far as Rome was concerned he died for treason. Jesus was conscious to his end. The traditional sequence of the last seven words from the Cross is as follows :

1. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do', Luke 23:34.
2. 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise', Luke 23:43.
3. 'Woman, behold your son ; behold your mother', John 19:26, 27.
4. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me', Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34.
5. 'I thirst', John 19:28.
6. 'It is finished', John 19:30.
7. 'Father unto thy hands I commit my spirit', Luke 23:46.

Jesus was crucified along with other two criminals each on his sides. He died on the cross and was buried.

### The Empty Tomb

The tomb was found to be empty by the women who went to the sepulchre at the early morning in the first day of the week. Mary Magdalene and other women who came to the tomb to pay their last respects to his body did not find the body, the covering stone was removed and the tomb was empty. She thought that the body was stolen by someone. She persisted that she should find out the body and worship it. The Gospels also tell us of various appearances of the risen Lord. The evangelists were not making up a story. St. Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthians prior to the Gospels, but did not specifically mention the empty tomb whereas his writings strongly proved the resurrection, I Cor. 15:3-8. He received this information from the apostles who preached the Gospel before his own conversion. The apostolic preaching as recorded in Acts is full of announcements of Jesus' resurrection (see for example 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10 ; 5:30 and 10:40).

The first eye-witnessing news was flashed to the disciples 'We found his tomb empty, but we say him alive'. The proclamation of these women was that the tomb was empty. When the tomb of Jesus was found to be empty, it was assumed that Jesus was risen from the dead. Mars

Magdalene wept as she said, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him', Joh 20:13. It did not occur to her mind that Jesus was risen. She saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

'Women', he said, 'why are you crying?'. Jesus said to her, 'Mary'. She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic 'Rabboni', which means Teacher. *This is the strongest proof for the empty tomb.* The death could not hold Jesus for ever. This was a defeat to the power of the world. Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of the world. He entered into death and caused defeat to the death and came out victoriously. 'Thanks be to God who gives us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord', I Cor 15:57. His death emptied the powers of death, disease and sin. They became powerless because of the resurrection of Jesus. 'Christianity is a religion of miracles and the miracle of Christ's resurrection is the living cent and object of Christian faith'. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

Resurrection is the new creation of the later day. Christ is the first fruit of them that are asleep. The power of the resurrection was the very source of the life of the apostolic Church. Phil. 3:10, Eph. 1:19, Col. 2:12, Rom. 6:5 and I Pet. 1:3, 3:21.

The Lord is risen—He is risen indeed. The power of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus was not only witnessed by the early church, but also it is the continuous experience of the present church in the day-to-day life.

### The Significance and the Meaning of the Resurrection

The Church is built on the firm foundation of faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Christ did not resurrect from the dead, the apostles could not have preached and the church would not have formed. The proclamation of the Goodnews of the Apostles was 'Jesus is alive'. If Jesus was alive after the third day of his death, it was true that He could not be in the tomb. It is easy for many to believe his spiritual resurrection. The followers of Jesus Christ did not proclaim in the first century A.D. and their hearers did not understand that way, but they understood the resurrection as resurrection of the body.

Jesus was risen from the dead with his body. This was the experience of hallucination but reality. The disciples did not mean the spiritual or the immortality of Jesus when they gave witness to his physical resurrection. Prophet Ezekiel had seen the vision and power of God that bodily resurrection is possible (Eze. 37:1-14). There was big opposition among the disciples of Christ. When they could not overcome the teachings of the early apostles and disprove their statement that Jesus was alive, that He was raised from death with his own body, He himself volunteered to prove that He was Jesus, appearing to them and calling Thomas to put his finger into the nail print in His hand and showed him His side also.

St. Paul was against the early Christians and Apollos prior to his conversion on his way to Damascus. Two years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he visited Corinth and preached Gospel there. He brought three historical points to prove the resurrection of Jesus. They are as follows :—

1. Christ died,
2. Christ was buried and
3. Christ was raised on the third day.

The 'third day' had been the most important part of emphasis of the preaching of the apostles, that was later incorporated into the Creeds : it means Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The fact was accepted that Christ was buried—this proved the death of Jesus (dead and buried). Jesus' resurrection meant that Jesus left the tomb unentombed. Paul did not witness the empty tomb, he met the living Christ on the way to Damascus. Some of those who saw the living Christ on the first Easter morning also saw the empty tomb. This was recorded in John 20:10. This serves as the first-hand testimony to the fact that Christ was raised from the dead. The fourth Gospel alone claims the direct report of an eye-witness. The body of Jesus Christ was not kept under the subject of natural law.

Throughout the New Testament Jesus' resurrection is treated as an event, not as an idea. Resurrection of Jesus is the Central faith of the Church. Christ lives in us, we live in Christ. We too shall be raised from the dead. We can offer our loved ones to God at the time of their death in an act of worship, whereby we thank him for their life with us and commit them to his faithful keeping. 'The Resurrection is God's.' Amen, for Jesus "It is finished . . ."

In His resurrection all that for which he lived and died is confirmed. By his resurrection Jesus was designated Son of God in power (Rom. 1:4).

In all . . . things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Rom. 8:37). Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:57).

Jesus Christ said, I am the resurrection and the life if any one believes in me, though he dies, he lives—John 11:25.

Christians must live out the power of the risen Lord Jesus Christ in their daily life. Resurrection proved beyond its limit that Christ is the Son of God. He came into the world. 'I have come that they may live, and I have it to the full'—John 10:11.

May the Lord give us the joy and faith to hold into his resurrection not only to live but to proclaim to the world that Christ is not a dead God, but a living God. He is going to visit us in His second coming, Revelation 22:12.

The risen Lord Jesus Christ charged his disciples to go into the world to preach the Gospel.

All authority in heaven and on earth had been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age (Matt. 28:16-20).

The declaration of the Gospel is a command to the disciples of Jesus Christ. Preaching was all about Christ's ministry, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and His second coming. As the early Church celebrated the Holy Eucharist, it was an expression of faith through the testimony of chosen witnesses. 'Who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead' (Acts 10:41). It is

this historical event of which the significance is brought out by means of the doctrine of the Ascension. The New Testament doctrine of Ascension of Christ teaches three fundamental truths concerning the risen Lord, that He is our Prophet, Priest and King.

The disciples recognised the Lord who appeared to them in resurrection as identical with the Lord whom they had known before his death, the Jesus of history, but they became aware that he now belonged to different order of existence. People shifted their belief from historical Christ to the Christ of faith. The Christ of faith was indeed the same Jesus as they had seen and heard during his earthly ministry. Jesus withdrew his historical reality in order to be nearer to them in this new form. This nearness of the risen Christ enabled increasing number of believers who had never known him in the old form.

The presence of the risen Lord is everywhere in this Universe. The power of the Resurrection has filled the entire Universe.

'Amen, Thy death, O Lord, we commemorate, Thy resurrection we confess, and Thy Second Coming we await. Glory be to Thee, O Christ.'

This is the firm faith of the early church. From this ancient prayer, we could understand the living faith of the Church in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

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# THE NEWNESS OF LIFE

MISS LANITA CHARLES\*

The twentieth century has not cut itself adrift from the eighteenth; the eighteenth continues to lay hold upon the twentieth. That period which stretches from both the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present, a period which largely cut itself loose from both the medieval synthesis and the Reformation outlook, and which has often sought to build a view of life that is without religious foundations. The rise of Enlightenment rationalism coincided with the decline in religious vitality. This decline followed an almost predictable cycle of religious life ebbs and flows rhythmically, periods of great activity being followed by periods of retraction and decline. This pattern was noted in the pre-Reformation period. The Patristic era was one of great creativity and vitality. It was followed by the Dark Ages in which much of the Christian world view and its culture was destroyed. The Middle Ages was a time of partial recovery and of conservation. The church was an institution flourished but its theology was largely involved in codifying past gains. Much of the Christian tradition has continued to maintain its identity with the past. Theologies which stress continuity argue that the 'supernatural' is revealed within the natural and therefore 'miracles' are often equated with the workings of natural law. To those with eyes to see a beautiful sunset or the regeneration of nature in spring are 'miracles'; whereas for those without eyes to see, sunsets and springtimes are simply sunsets and springtimes. Because human nature is seen as a natural receptacle of the divine and as being infused by the divine, human insight is often thought to be the means of divine revelation. Theology in this framework generally depict Jesus as the perfection of an existing religious consciousness that is common to all or most people. They usually begin with whatever can be known of the historical Jesus; and the divine is conceived within the limits of what is human. This, of course, often results in what is divine being equated with and thereby defined as extraordinary insight or profound moral consciousness. There is little or no substantial and personal union between the human and divine, but rather an infusion of the latter is seen to have taken place in the former, so that an aura is created within the human Jesus, such that it can be said God dwelled in him.

In the beginning the WORD was and the WORD was with God and the WORD was God. (Jn. 1:1). The Gospels reveal to men the mystery of God's inner life; it tells of God in himself. Through it God speaks and reveals that He is Father, begetting His Son from all eternity. His Word, His beloved Son, abides with Him. The Son lives with the Father, sharing His life and perfection, delighted to rest in His love. Christ, the eternal Word, is the living wisdom of God. God's wisdom is now known to be a person, the Father's living Word dwelling with Him. The Gospels record the life of Jesus: it proclaims the message—Jesus the Christ is the Word, the eternal Son of the Father, God like his Father. He

is the Father's living Wisdom, His own perfect expression, As he shares the Father's being, so also he shares His creative actions.

More than nineteen hundred years ago, God in Christ stepped out of eternity into time. Although Jesus Christ was himself the Creative Deity, by whom all things were made, as man he humbled himself—set aside his divine prerogatives and walked on this earth as man—a perfect image of what God intended man to be. God in His loving kindness made known to His creatures the secret of His own life. The revelation of God's inner life fills us with admiration for the divine Creator, leads us to the summit of contemplation. God graciously introduces us to the beatific vision, which is to know God as He is to see Him through Jesus Christ, to give a new beginning in life. Of Christ Napoleon had said: 'Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man towards the unseen that it transcends the barriers of time and space across the chasm of twenty hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy'.

When H. G. Wells, the noted historian was asked which person has left the most permanent impression, he replied that judging a person's greatness by historical standards, Jesus stands first. Thomas Carlyle refers to Jesus as 'our divinest symbol, higher the human thought not yet reached; a symbol of quite perennial, infinite characters, whose righteousness will never demand to be a new inquired, and a new made manifest.'

The name Jesus was derived from the Greek form of the name Joshus or Jeshua, meaning 'Jehovah-Saviour' or the 'Lord saves'. The title Christ was derived from the Greek or even Hebrew word for Messiah and means 'the anointed one'. Jesus Christ affirmed himself as the King, the Son of God. Jesus Christ gave all mankind by his living example, the pattern for the good life. He showed you and me how to live and live well; through his touch, his truth, his light, his love, his compassion and his tender mercy, he showed the way. God is revealed to man as light, truth and wisdom. Alas, man refused to acknowledge; and the world continued replete with crime, violence, wars and disease. Jesus showed the way to rebuild the broken life: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'.

Jesus excercised a power over natural forces which could only belong to God, the author of those forces. On the sea of Galilee Jesus calmed a raging storm; from five loaves and two fishes he fed 5,000 hungry people. He gave bread to the breadless. He gave a grieving widow back her only son by raising him from the dead; he brought back to life the dead daughter of a shattered father; he gave sight to the sightless; to Lazarus, an old friend he said, 'Lazarus, come forth', dramatically raising him from the dead four days after his burial. By making the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, Jesus demonstrated the Creator's power.

\* Miss Lanita Charles is the editor of the ISPCK publications, Delhi

People began to follow Jesus. His popularity with the people made him politically vulnerable. He incurred the hostility of the scribes and Pharisees by rejecting their interpretation of the law. He also incurred the fear and hostility of the noble and priestly classes; his triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; and his challenging their authority by driving the moneychangers out of the temple upset the Jews. As religious leader he became a great threat to the leaders of Jerusalem. Thus he was condemned for blasphemy; he was accused of aiming to be the 'King of the Jews' and thereby posing threat to the authority of Caesar.

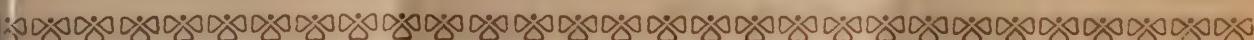
Crucifixion was practised extensively by the Romans or the lowest types of criminals but rarely for Roman citizens. After a criminal was sentenced, he was made carry the heavy wooden cross to the scene of his torture and then death outside the city. Jesus was sentenced and crucified on the cross on Friday. Jesus saw his death as part of the good news to be spread throughout the world. On the third day i.e. Sunday, Jesus rose again. That is celebrated as Easter, which commemorates the power of resurrection. Easter means living in 'newness of life' that come to us by the resurrected Christ.

Men's hearts are broken by betrayal, rejection and loneliness. Human bodies are broken by disease, crime, accidents and violence. Human minds are broken by disobedience, immorality and unfaithfulness, burdens of fear and absence of love and rebellion against God. Everyone of us is involved in some way with brokenness and misery of human existence. 'When we were utterly helpless with no way of escape Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners Romans 5:6; because God is so rich in mercy He loved us so much that even though we were spiritually dead and doomed by our sins,

He gave us back life again (Eph. 2:4, 5). Death is a mighty conqueror; but resurrection is a greater power for it breaks the power of grave. Sin came into the world through man's rebellion against God and death through sin; death embraced all men, because all men sinned. The grievousness of sin has been broken by the sacrifice of Christ in Calvary; the power of sin was completely overcome by his victorious resurrection on the Sunday that we call the first Easter. For Christians resurrection is not simply an event in the past to which they look back; it also has an implication for the present. The person who puts his trust in Jesus is united with him; and this union and identification with him offers deliverance from the power of sin; and an opportunity of enjoying the newness of life.

In his book, 'Easter' Alan Watts writes: 'The story of Jesus lives on, not because he was an innocent man who died a cruel death with bravery, for others have done as much; not because he was a great teacher of spiritual principles; for there was nothing peculiarly original in his doctrine; not even because he returned from death for that too has been recorded of others. Christ's story lives on, because it has fascinated man's mind with the thought of a God who had shared the life of his creatures; a king who has become his own subject. It is the revelation that the Lord of the Universe is not a cruel puppet master who watched his playthings writhing in the toils of tragedy but has turned it into triumph.'

The alleluia of Easter not only commemorate an event to be celebrated but express a hope to be shared. Those who keep Easter know that the rites of its liturgy are embedded in the renewal and the earth's life in another spring. When the mystery reveals a coming of life—a resurrection—it is hard not to share in the joy.



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# Sermon Outlines for April 1989

REV. J. M. JOGULA, M.A., M.Th., Dharwad

## 1. 2ND APRIL 1989: SUNDAY NEXT AFTER EASTER

### Manifestation to the Seven

Bible Passages : Isaiah 62 : 1-5. Rev. 22 : 1-15.  
John 21 : 1-14.

'The first and simplest aim of this story is to make quite clear the reality of the resurrection. The Risen Lord was not a vision, nor the figment of someone's excited imagination, nor the appearance of a spirit or a ghost : it was Jesus who had conquered death and come back.' —William Barclay.

Not all the disciple but only seven of them were there while Jesus showed Himself at the sea of Tiberias.

1. John does not explain the reason why they went for fishing, which they had left for about three years. But he tells that they caught nothing though they laboured all the night. Struggle in the night without Christ was in vain.

### 2. Jesus :

- (i) He was there at the dawn. They did not recognise Him.
- (ii) His first concern was to ask them of their need.
- (iii) He helped them to catch fish.

It was a great surprise. They caught 153 fishes.

### 3. Disciples :

- (i) They did not recognise Jesus at first.
- (ii) They obeyed Christ's words.
- (iii) The beloved disciple—John—told Peter—It is the Lord.
- (iv) Peter seems to meet His Master.
- (v) They did not dare to question Jesus.

### 4. Jesus :

He had prepared a meal for them and invited them to take part in it. Read Ps. 23.

## 2. 9TH APRIL 1989 : SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### The Good Shepherd

Bible Passages : Ezekiel 34 : 23-31. Heb. 13 : 20-21.  
John 10 : 22-30.

In Ezekiel Ch. 34, the terms—sheep, shepherd, flock etc. are used and relationship of God with His people—Israel—is compared. Leaders of Israelites were also called shepherds—but they are not good shepherds.

In Hebrew 13 : 20-21, the writer of the epistle in the words of benediction calls Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the church as His flock.

John 10 : 22-30 :

Here we have an encounter between Jesus Christ and the Jews in the Temple at the time of the feast of dedication.

### 1. Jews :

- (i) Their question to Christ.
- (ii) They did not believe in the words and actions of Christ.
- (iii) They do not belong to the flock. They opposed Him.

### 2. Jesus Christ : the Good Shepherd

He has already done His part : His preaching, teaching and His works.

He knows them.

He gives them eternal life.

### 3. His sheep :

They listen to His voice.

They follow Him.

They will never perish. They are secure in His hands.

## 3. 16TH APRIL 1989 : THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### The Light of the World

Bible Passages : 2 Samuel 23 : 2-5. 1 John 2 : 3:11  
John 12 : 35-46.

2 Samuel 23 : 2-5 : He who rules men with justice and in the fear of God shall be like the light of the morning.

1 John 2 : 3-11 : True light is already shining. Light helps to love one another and walk in right path.

John 12 : 35-46 :

Jesus had already made an impression on the minds of the people that He is the King by triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But He saw the mixed reactions. They were some who were not at all moved to accept Jesus. Jesus quotes Isaiah to show the reason.

### Jesus Christ is the light

(i) V. 35. a little while : Christ is here once again hinting about his departure from this earth—i.e. the end of the life in flesh.

Christ is warning the people—they have to walk in light by accepting Christ while He is in this world with them.

V. 36 Believe in the light.

(ii) Believing and seeing Christ is believing and seeing God. Vs. 44-45.

(iii) Jesus is light. He has come so that he who believes in Him is liberated from darkness, death and gain light and life. V. 46.

## 4. 23RD APRIL 1989 : FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

### The Way, the Truth and the Life

Bible Passages : Joshua 20 : 1-6 1 Peter 1 : 22-23  
John 5 : 25-40.

Joshua 20 : 1-6 : City of refuge. An arrangement for the safety of the innocent at the time of crisis.  
1 Peter 1 : 22-25 : '...purified your souls in obeying the truth—love one another fervently with a pure heart'.

John 5 : 25-40.

In Ch. 5 John records the healing of a paralytic Bethesda on a Sabbath day. Because Jesus told Jews that 'My Father worketh, hitherto and I work the Jews sought to kill Him. Two reasons : (i) Breaking of Sabbath (ii) making himself equal with God.

1. Jesus has life and authority. V. 26-27. This is given to him by God. V. 30.

### 2. Witnesses :

- (i) Witness of John the Baptist. Vs. 31-35.
- (ii) Witness of the works of Christ. V. 36.
- (iii) Witness of God the Father. Vs. 37-38.
- (iv) Witness of the Scriptures. V. 39.

### 3. Jew's rejection of Christ. V. 40.

ing to the Father

Bible Passages : Exodus 19:10-20. Rev. 14:1-5.  
John 14:12-17.

Exodus 19:10-20 : Meeting point of God and men  
on the top of the mountain. God descending and  
sending to meet.

Rev. 14:1-5. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God standing  
on Mount Zion along with the first Fruits of God.

John 14:12-17. Jesus Christ promises His disciples/  
believers :

- (i) They will do the works those were done by Jesus.
- (ii) Requests will be granted.
- (iii) Father will give another Comforter, the Spirit of  
truth, who will abide with them forever.

When Jesus was speaking of his going to the Father,  
he promised the disciples the coming of the Holy  
Spirit.

## Christian Spirituality in the Context of Suffering

*A Report of the NCCI Youth Workshop*

Today, we are witnessing an amazing resurgence of religion in its fundamentalist and new forms. Religious communities are becoming more and more aggressive, exclusive and insular. Religion instead of being a liberating and uniting force has become a reactionary and divisive force.

The Youth department of the National Council of Churches in India organised a four-day Workshop on 'Spirituality and Human Suffering' at Dehra Dun. About young people took part in this Workshop. They were from different states and churches in North India.

Through the quiet introspective meditations, brain storming sessions, group discussions, bible studies, etc. the participants tried to discover the meaning of Christian spirituality in the context of Indian realities. Three papers were presented during the Workshop.

The first paper was presented by Mrs. Vinita Deenandhu who spoke on 'Democracy and Development in India Today'. She pointed out that in spite of the many advancements made in the fields of science, technology, industry, agriculture, etc. the impoverishment of millions of our people is an ongoing reality. The problem, therefore, is structural as the successive feudal and capitalist economies have vested all economic and political powers in the hands of a few people and whatever is done in the name of development is for the advantage of the affluent sections of the society, she added. In a situation such as this, democracy and socialism have no meaning. She urged the youth to work towards a justice oriented, holistic development of all people. She warned the young people against the conformist and reactionary forces operating in many subtle ways. State development, charity oriented development, justice oriented development and young people's involvement in movements for justice and human rights were the other issues dealt with in her presentation.

The Rev. S. R. Cutting spoke on 'Church's Response to Human Suffering'. Quoting instances from his pastoral experience, he systematically evaluated the various understandings of 'Church'. Western theological input and its complex nature have hindered the Indian Church from discovering its true identity and role in the Indian context, he pointed out. He said that as a result, Christian communities today have become insular and inhibitive in their witness and service. They have narrowed down the witness of God's scope of salvation to the salvation of the soul alone thus taking a passive, indifferent attitude towards the existential demands of human life. He further pointed out that the Church is neither a building nor just

a community of believers but a movement of God's people striving to usher in the Kingdom of God. Church is the visible sign of God's Kingdom, he added.

The third presentation was by the Rev. P. D. Shyam Rao on 'Spirituality and Social Realities'. He expounded at length on spirituality as understood by people of different faiths. He then went on to describe Christian spirituality by saying that the two prominent popular trends—the other worldly and this worldly—have their merits and demerits. While the former neglects the existential human dilemma, the latter ignores the transcendental aspect of human reality. Christian spirituality takes both into consideration, he said. He also proposed three aspects of Christian spirituality as important in our present social realities. Firstly, he said that, a transreligious spirituality alone can counter the divisiveness caused by the fundamentalist resurgence of religion. Secondly, our spirituality should be dialogical as religious plurality today is a fact and that aggressive, exclusivist attitudes will not serve the purpose of effective mission. Thirdly, it also has to be an enabling spirituality as the majority of the Indians are kept unconscientised about liberative forces by the powers.

After four days of intense corporate and individual search, reflection and study, the participants tried to understand some of the key issues in a much larger perspective. There was no consensus as it is characteristic of youthful creativity. Yet, the following are some of the views generally agreed upon :

— suffering is not just physical pain or economic deprivation only, but is much larger in nature. Alienation, humiliation, dehumanization, threat, shame, deprivation, etc. are also to be put in this category.

— suffering is man-made. Human greed for money and power operating through social, political and economic structures are responsible for this. They need to be destroyed and a new just and humane order has to emerge.

— Christian spirituality is that which associates itself with the ongoing creative and redemptive activity of God seeking to fulfill God's promise through Jesus Christ—the abundant life for all. Spirituality should enable people to work towards this new social order.

— In this context, salvation through Christ has to be understood as a process of humanization. It is a process of liberation from all death dealing forces which work against God's good creation.

# Faith And Worship

'We believe in the transforming power of the liturgy in its various forms and in the inherent need to the transcend limits of daily life in celebration.'

This confession—timid, perhaps, but nevertheless prophetic—by the WCC's Fifth Assembly (Nairobi, 1975) was remarkably confirmed by the experience of the Vancouver Assembly seven-and-a-half years later.

The recovery of 'confidence in worship', of celebrating personal and community faith, is a vital component of a profound spirituality crossing the ecumenical community today.

This is a new kind of liturgical renewal, not so much concerned with appropriating each others' worship material and symbols though that is still an immense and largely unexplored treasure as with the rebirth of the Christian community as the praying church, ecclesia orans, standing before the reality of God's grace and love.

Unless the churches remain in a permanent attitude of intercession and adoration 'in spirit and truth' (John 4:24), they cannot renew their inner life, proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the world, raise their voice against the powers of evil and implement the kingdom gifts of peace and justice.

*Lex credendi, lex orandi*: the way we pray reflects the content of our faith and, conversely, our doctrines shape our rituals of worship.

This was a cardinal principle of the ancient church, which saw worship and doctrine as a totality, conveying life in Christ as one and the same embracing event of salvation.

Such an understanding says No to a fragmentary, dichotomized method of understanding and manifesting how God works in human history.

When Eastern churches speak about orthodoxy, they reflect this wholeness. Doctrine, ethics and the Christian way of living are not independent systems. Everything is a 'matter of faith' and everything is a 'matter of worship'. Faith and worship, liturgy and life are inseparable.

This ethos from the Eastern tradition has enriched the ecumenical agenda with insights and perspectives that have been less familiar or forgotten in the Western tradition—such as monastic spirituality, communication of the faith through iconography and the 'liturgy after the liturgy'—extending into life in society.

One could mention several factors behind this emergence of worship renewal in the ecumenical movement. One important reason is the need to avoid an idolatrous conflict in which churches, as institutions and sociological communities, might otherwise be imprisoned.

In recent decades, churches have gradually reinforced the militant tone of their voices. They have spoken 'advocacy' and 'resistance' as models of mission. They have insisted that solidarity with the poor and oppressed is part of the gospel discipline.

The result has often been confrontation in the arena of political decision-making. Against this background, the churches need a spiritual catharsis if they are to discern whether or not they are themselves being faithful and obedient to the gospel.

Along with the struggle against the powers come many ambiguities. In the process of analyzing historical contexts, we may impose on people new idols, which we invoke with the honour due to God alone.

Thus the churches need a deeper knowledge of God in the presence of his Spirit, before the icon of his face—an act of praise and adoration.

They need to focus their attention on God, to whom belong the wisdom, the power and the glory. Political wisdom must be sought in the experience of prayer and spiritual worship offered to God in daily life.

A second important reason for ecumenical liturgical renewal is the need to affirm worship as a way to connect to live and to celebrate the faith.

There are churches in the ecumenical movement and in the WCC which do not have a tradition of doctrine, extensive and systematic catechism, of dogmatic decisions handed down by authoritative councils. In many churches the liturgy is essential to living and proclaiming the gospel with the whole human being, heart and mind. Worship profoundly touches the senses of those present. Just as the disciples became witnesses, they too are compelled to recount their experience.

Worship not only stimulates and intensifies the spirit but also opens a way to faith. There is a call to mission in every service of worship.

In prayer and worship God's gracious gift of the spirit of all is discovered in a mysterious way.

Lex orandi is an echo of that heavenly liturgy which affirms God's power over the creation. Jesus Christ

Lord, because he is the minister (leiturgos of the New covenant Hebrews 8 : 2). Christ alone the Lamb of God who broke the seals of tyranny, is able to inaugurate new earth and a new heaven (Revelation 6 : 10).

Therefore, in the liturgy we are living in the liturgy we are living in the basileia, the city of the living God, celestial Jerusalem (Revelation 12 : 20). From this perspective, liturgy must also express the true character of the persons of this world. The dynamic force of a liturgy which creates fellowship, koinonia, with the Lord is the true energy of the community following the way of our Priest, Jesus Christ.

The most dynamic Christian communities, ecclesiastically and sociologically, are those which become communities of reference for the people because of the sense of solidarity and hospitality that grows among their members.

In Eastern Europe for example the relevance of liturgy building up communion is a symbol of the bodily senses.

In many places, indigenization of the faith happens through worship, personal and collective. Convergence of faith is not limited to the creeds, confession and canons of the ecumenical councils, but is even better expressed in doxological affirmations, songs and hymns.

Without the eucharist, the faithful cannot continue a life in Christ's way. He everything is revealed in public—on a liturgical stage, as it were—where the life of the person and the life of the community are one. Thus there is a need to create a space for small local congregations to bring in their preoccupations, their sins, weaknesses and limitations, their will to repent. Worship is a platform where different forms of spiritualities can be expressed coherently.

The search for unity at the local level depends a great deal on ecumenical convergence in intercession and eucharistic hospitality. Not only does this raise the question of how people celebrate the faith, but also of the content of the faith they celebrate.

The practice of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the use of the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle are ways of broadening the praying base of the ecumenical community.

Mutual intercession is a moment of becoming humble and penitent, in order silence for mystical conversation. In God's presence we move onto ground where we have to remove our shoes and pray with one voice and heart : 'Our Father'.

Or, as we pray in the Orthodox liturgy : 'Let us love one another that we may with one mind confess : the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Trinity one in essence and inseparable'.

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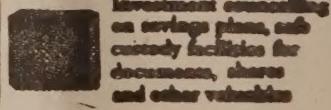
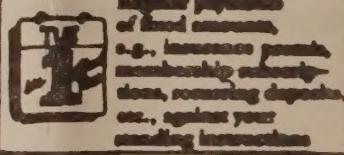
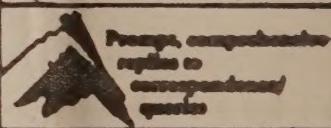
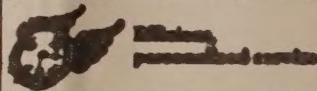
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